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The Van Ness House
Pompton Pike
Pompton Plains, Morris County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

The Van Ness House
Pompton Pike
Pompton Plains, Morris County, New Jersey

Owners: Charles, Viola, and Edna Brown

Date of Erection: Main unit about 1770; stone wing
about 1790; frame wing 1820

Architect:

Builders: Members of Van Ness family

Present Condition: Abandoned

Number of Stories: One and one-half

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - main unit
and east wing stone with
brownstone quoins; west wing
frame, brick paned

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch with gables
of later date

Historical Data:

The first settlement of what is now Pequannock Township was made about 1700 or a little later. In 1696 Arent Schuyler and Anthony Brockholst received a deed from the proprietors of East Jersey and also from William Biddle and George Hutchinson of Burlington for land on the west side of the Pequannock River. It was for 1500 acres and covered all of Pompton Plains down to the

Passaic near Two Bridges.

In 1710 and again in 1717 Arent Schuyler deeded land to Simon Van Ness et als. The deed of May 27, 1717 to "Syman Vanness" then of Horseneck, Essex County, is for most of the 1500 acres mentioned above. A search of the title of the present property shows that Giles Van Ness, a descendant of Simon, owned it at his death about 1850-55. His homestead was sold by the heirs to his son Garret in 1859. Garret sold the property in 1861 and bought it back in 1863. The Mutual Life Insurance Company obtained possession in 1884 and sold in 1895 to John H. Brown, father of present owners.

The Van Ness family is descended from a Simon Van Ness who was living in Schenectady in 1689-90 when that place was destroyed by the Indians. He then settled at Fairfield, Essex County. One of his sons was a Simon who we believe made the purchase from Arent Schuyler. Whether the Giles mentioned above was a son or a grandson of this Simon we are not certain; for that reason, we have not given the first name of the builder.

Architecturally the house is extremely interesting. It was built in three sections. The middle portion ^{was} ~~being~~ the earliest and consisted only of the four rooms on the first floor with an open attic. The next unit was the stone wing on the east elevation; this consists of one room on the first floor and one room on the second floor. It has a separate stairway and the second floor is not connected with the main part. On the east elevation of this wing is a Dutch oven interesting because it has been roofed over. The third section is frame; like the stone unit it has one room on the first floor and one on the second, and has a separate stairway to the second floor. This unit also had a Dutch oven on the west elevation. The attic over the main part was made into bedrooms with the addition of dormers about 1870-1880; the two porches on the north and south elevations of the main unit were added about the same time.

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Information from Mrs. Simon Van Ness,
whose mother was a Van Ness

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Walter E. Rutt
Supervising Historian

Approved:

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